IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2017 **(archived)**
Finalised on 09 November 2017

Please note: this is an archived Conservation Outlook Assessment for Mount Emei Scenic Area, including Leshan Giant Buddha Scenic Area. To access the most up-to-date Conservation Outlook Assessment for this site, please visit https://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org.

Mount Emei Scenic Area, including Leshan Giant Buddha Scenic Area

SITE INFORMATION

Country:
China
Inscribed in: 1996
Criteria:
(iv) (vi) (x)

Site description:
The first Buddhist temple in China was built here in Sichuan Province in the 1st century A.D. in the beautiful surroundings of the summit Mount Emei. The addition of other temples turned the site into one of Buddhism's holiest sites. Over the centuries, the cultural treasures grew in number. The most remarkable is the Giant Buddha of Leshan, carved out of a hillside in the 8th century and looking down on the confluence of three rivers. At 71 m high, it is the largest Buddha in the world. Mount Emei is also notable for its exceptionally diverse vegetation, ranging from subtropical to subalpine pine forests. Some of the trees there are more than 1,000 years old. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2017 Conservation Outlook

Good

The management of the property is being improved under strong protection legislation and planning provisions. The site is a very significant national sacred place and is an internationally renowned religious site, which attracts huge numbers of tourists and pilgrims. Although there is some overcrowding at times, current visitor impacts are recognized and controlled through management intervention, however, the impact of tourism is still significant. There are a few other threats and pressures on natural values in particular, but these are not serious. Vigilance is required to ensure that the current levels of protection are maintained in the long term. The likely increase in climate change effects on species and habitats should also be closely watched. There should be improved monitoring of the site’s biological values, and a better balance of management effort between the protection of cultural values, which are given priority, and natural values.

Current state and trend of VALUES

Low Concern
Trend: Data Deficient

There are some concern about the condition of natural values of the property, particularly in areas where tourism is concentrate and which therefore face both direct impacts from tourism disturbance and indirect impacts, from atmospheric pollution for example. Insufficient management effort is directed at monitoring of the highly significant natural values and there may be undesirable trends that remain undetected. The imbalance between management of cultural and natural values should be redressed.

Overall THREATS

Very Low Threat

Overall threats to the property are generally of low impact. The most obvious threats stem from the large and increasing numbers of tourists and pilgrims, and the consequential development of facilities infrastructure. A cable and monorail provide ready access to high summits but can cause overcrowding at the most popular spots and introduce people to sensitive vegetation habitats. Additional threats relate to acidification of freshwater bodies and soil from air pollution. To date, management intervention has been applied to address these threats but the effectivenedd needs to be monitored.

Overall PROTECTION and MANAGEMENT

Mostly Effective

Protection and management in recent years, especially with increased tourist pressure, is being improved, but there is no monitoring data to indicate its effectiveness. Management of the property is well-founded in law and guided by a comprehensive management plan providing regulations and other measures for effective management intervention. There is a full scientific programme and research results are used to improve management. Some concerns relate to the lack of monitoring of human impacts on biodiversity values.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

- **Exceptionally rich plant diversity of special significance to conservation and science**
  Criterion:(x)

  Located transitionally between the Sichuan Basin and Himalayan mountains, Mt Emei has an exceptionally rich floral diversity consisting of some 3,700 plant species, of which more than 100 are endemic. Among the important plants are orchids, primulas, rhododendrons, camellias, ginkgos, cycads and tree ferns (Foster et al. 2010; Li & Shi 2007). Mt. Emei has the most typical and well preserved subtropical mountain vegetation landscape, developing complete forest vertical band from low to high. Over an altitudinal range of 2,600 m there are many vegetation zones including subtropical evergreen broad-leaved forest, mixed evergreen and deciduous broad-leaved forest, mixed broad-leaved and conifer forest, and subalpine conifer forest. Rare and threatened subtropical plants, such as Alsophila, Cibotium barometz and other ombrophyte species can be found here. Endangered relict plants like Davidia involucrata, Cercidiphyllum, Tetracentron sinense are preserved in evergreen and deciduous mixed forest (IUCN Consultation, 2017). The diverse vegetation habitats support more than 2,300 species of animals, including several threatened at the global scale such as the red panda, Asiatic black bear and golden cat, Tibetan macaque and Chinese giant salamander (People’s republic of China 1995; SoOUV, 2012; WCMC, 2011).

Other important biodiversity values

► Other biodiversity values

The Mt Emei property is within a WWF Global 200 Freshwater Eco-region and a Birdlife International Endemic Bird Area. It is identified as a Key Biodiversity Area by Conservation International and an Alliance for Zero Extinction Site. It is noteworthy that protection of the natural values of the site has been enhanced by its long-standing status as a national sacred site.

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

Low Threat

Threats to the site’s value mainly stem from tourism developments and operations. Tourism impacts on plant biodiversity and soil, and indirect threat on other species such as amphibians are of a concern (Ni, 2016).

► Water Pollution

Low Threat
Inside site

Acid rain from air pollution has detrimentally affected streams, rivers, ponds and lakes (Foster et al. 2010).

► Tourism/ Recreation Areas

Low Threat
Inside site, scattered(5-15%)

There is an intensive tourism development inside the property. The impact along the tourism sites and trails on vegetation is significant and tourist

disturbance also has an impact on soils (Ni, 2016). Feeding of Macaque monkeys by tourists is still a problem (Priston, 2013). Management efforts have been made to control the impact of tourism but their effectiveness remains to be demonstrated. (Lu, 2013, Wang, 2013, Zhu 2013, Fan, 2012, IUCN Consultation, 2017). Particularly, construction of tourism facilities has increased significantly around Fuhu Temple. And impacts have been observed on the landscape of subtropical evergreen broad-leaved forest of Mt. Emei (IUCN Consultation, 2017).

► Roads/ Railroads

Low Threat
Inside site, scattered(5-15%)

A cable car carries hundreds of thousands of visitors annually to Golden Summit and has accentuated crowding pressure at this popular spot. It also brings more people into the sensitive montane forest belt. A 2.1 km-long light monorail was installed in 1998 to carry people from Golden Summit to Wanfoding Summit. (ICOMOS, 1995; IUCN, 1995; SOC Report, 2000).The monorail is currently not being operated and therefore its impacts are minimal. There are plans for Aa new cable car to be built to Wanfoding Summit (Emei official website, 2017); potential impacts of this development are unclear.

► Other Biological Resource Use

Low Threat
Inside site, extent of threat not known

There are reports that harvesting of some animal species, including some endemic amphibian species, continues despite management efforts to prevent it; however, the extent of impacts is unclear (IUCN Consultation, 2017; Huaxi Daily, 30/11/2014).

Potential Threats

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

▶ Relationships with local people

Mostly Effective

There are more than 20,000 permanent residents in the property, mainly peasant farmers and Buddhist monks (WCMC, 2012; IUCN Consultation, 2017). Residents have participated in a community based enterprise development study and trial (FAO, 2006). Monks have been encouraged to play a larger role in supporting and managing the property (20COM VIII.B).

▶ Legal framework

Mostly Effective

There are good national and local laws for protection and management of natural and cultural values and attributes (People’s Republic of China 1995; ICOMOS 1995; IUCN 1995; SOC Report, 2000). Less is known about enforcement processes and capability.

▶ Enforcement

Data Deficient

Data deficient.

▶ Integration into regional and national planning systems

Data Deficient

.

▶ Management system

Mostly Effective

The property is managed under local administration and a management plan exists along with specialized plans (People’s republic of China, 1995; WCMC, 2012).

▶ Management effectiveness

Mostly Effective

Management appears to be implemented and effectiveeffective , (SOC Report, 2000, Lu, 2013). With increased tourism pressure in recent years, more stringent management measures will be required (Ni, 2016).

► Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Mostly Effective

State Party has generally responded to Committee requests and recommendations.

► Boundaries

Mostly Effective

.The boundaries of the property are considered adequate. Because of its size and relative inaccessibility, much of the area remains untouched (World Heritage Committee, 2012).

► Sustainable finance

Data Deficient

.

► Staff training and development

Data Deficient

.

► Sustainable use

Some Concern

The main use of the property is for tourism. However, there are some concerns with regards to increasing pressure from tourism numbers and associated facilities.

► Education and interpretation programs

Data Deficient

.

► Tourism and visitation management

Some Concern

Some concerns have been raised about infrastructure development, overcrowding at sites and on trails, and littering (ICOMOS 1995; IUCN 1995; WCMC, 2012).

► Monitoring

Some Concern

Concern that there was no reporting of monitoring of impacts on natural values as recently as 2004 (WCMC, 2012).

► Research

Mostly Effective

There has been much research effort on natural and cultural features both by international and domestic scientists. There are 15 specialized scientific and technical institutions in the area including a botanical garden. Plant and animal specimens are held in many international collections (WCMC, 2012).

Overall assessment of protection and management

Mostly Effective

Protection and management in recent years, especially with increased tourist pressure, is being improved, but there is no monitoring data to indicate its effectiveness. Management of the property is well-founded in law and guided by a comprehensive management plan providing regulations and other measures for effective management intervention. There is a full scientific programme and research results are used to improve management. Some concerns relate to the lack of monitoring of human impacts on biodiversity values.

► Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in

addressing threats outside the site

Data Deficient

.

State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

▶ **Exceptionally rich plant diversity of special significance to conservation and science**

Low Concern
Trend:Stable

The property provides critical habitat for many threatened and endangered species of biota. None is reported to be of more than low concern. However, there is a lack of data from monitoring of impacts on species and habitats and the true picture may not be revealed. More management effort should be directed at systematic monitoring of human impacts to ensure that there are no long-term trends that could detrimentally affect the survival of key species of plant and animals (Foster et al. 2010; IUCN, 1995; SOC Report, 2000). Plant diversity is being significantly impacted by tourists.

Summary of the Values

▶ **Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values**

Low Concern

Trend: Data Deficient

There are some concern about the condition of natural values of the property, particularly in areas where tourism is concentrate and which therefore face both direct impacts from tourism disturbance and indirect impacts, from atmospheric pollution for example. Insufficient management effort is directed at monitoring of the highly significant natural values and there may be undesirable trends that remain undetected. The imbalance

between management of cultural and natural values should be redressed.

Additional information

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

► History and tradition

The property is of exceptional cultural and spiritual significance as the birthplace of the Buddhist religion in China and the place from where it spread widely through the East. It is one of the four holy lands of Chinese Buddhism. It also contains a magnificent array of religious monuments and treasures, including the largest carved statue of Buddha in the world.

► Outdoor recreation and tourism

The Mt Emei property is one of the most important Buddhist worship centres in the world and attracts huge numbers of domestic and international pilgrim visitors.

Summary of benefits

Mt Emei is of major global significance for profession and promotion of Buddhist religious faith, and an internationally important centre of religious tourism. The property is also of global significance for the protection of plant and animal diversity within the Asia region. As such, Mt Emei is a place of major benefit to the world community for protection of outstanding universal cultural and natural values.

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
1	Conservation and Management of Historical Relicts in Mt. Emei	From: 2018 To: 2019	Preservation and restoration project Phase I of Wannian Temple of Mt. Emei: repair Wei’e Palace and Daxiong Palace of Wannian Temple, the scope of which is about 1900 m2.
2	Emei Captive Panda Breeding Centre	From: 2012	Introduced 3 pandas from Wolong Panda Research Centre and the number increased to 7 in 2016. Scientific research is ongoing.
3	Sichuan Natural Resource Research Institute	From: 2016	Forest pest survey
4	Sichuan Natural Resource Research Institute		Emei Biological Resource Station. This is a research platform that have facilitated multiple long-term species and ecosystem researches and education programs, as well as establishing a botanical garden in Emei.

Compilation of potential site needs

№	Site need title	Brief description of potential site needs	Support needed for following years
1	.	Strengthen the support for Mt. Emei biodiversity research.	

REFERENCES

№	References
1	FAO 2006. Community-based commercial enterprise development for the conservation of biodiversity in Mount Emei World Heritage Site, Sichuan, China. Forestry Policy and Institutions Working Paper No. 17, Rome, Italy.
2	Fan W J, Sun J H, Sun K Q., 2012. A synthetic analysis on the effective Protection and management of World Heritage Sites in the geological disaster area: a case study of Sichuan, China. Advanced Materials Research. Trans Tech Publications, 524: 2702-2711.
3	Fan Z, Zhong S, Zhang W. 2012. Harmonious tourism environment and tourist's perception: An empirical study of mountain-type world cultural heritage sites in China. Journal of Service Science and Management, 5(01): 95.
4	Foster, M.N. et al. 2010. Synergies between World Heritage sites and key biodiversity areas. World Heritage Paper No. 56, UNESCO, Paris, France.
5	Huaxi Daily, 30/11/2014, Rare species Emei Mogophrys frog sold to restaurant at a high price.
6	ICOMOS 1995. Mt Emei evaluation report.
7	IUCN 1995. Mt Emei evaluation report.
8	Jiang WJ, et al., 1996. Impact of tourism on ecological environment in Emei and conservation strategies. Environmental Sciences, (03):48-51
9	Li, Zhen-Yu. Shi, Lei 2007. Plants of Mount Emei.
10	Lu S, Xie K P, Li C H., 2013. Preliminary studies on the evaluation system of endangered wild officinal plants in Mount Emei[J]. Guihaia, 33(2): 229-235.
11	Ni, S.S., et al., 2016. Impact to tourism disturbance on soil and vegetation in Emei. China Agricultural Resources and Zoning 2016,37(03):93-96.
12	People's Republic of China 1995. Nomination of Mt Emei and Leshan Giant Buddha.
13	Priston N E C, McLennan M R., 2013. Managing humans, managing macaques: Human–macaque conflict in Asia and Africa. The macaque connection. Springer New York, pp 225-250.

№	References
14	SOC Report, 1999.
15	SOC Report, 2000
16	SoOUV, 2012.
17	WCMC 2011. Fact Sheet: Mt Emei Scenic Area, including Leshan Giant Buddha Scenic Area, China.
18	Zhu Y, Li N., 2013. Groping for stones to cross the river: Governing heritage in Emei. Cultural Heritage Politics in China. Springer New York, pp 51-71.
19	Zhu Y, Li N., 2013. Groping for stones to cross the river: Governing heritage in Emei. Cultural Heritage Politics in China. Springer New York, pp 51-71.